

Preface by Dan Glickman Secretary of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is completing its first decade of strong partnerships with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and their members. Almost 10 years ago, USDA and the Department of the Interior agreed to a new foundation to improve the delivery of programs and services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. Consistent with this commitment, USDA has reached out to inform American Indians and Alaska Natives about USDA programs and services available to them, to deliver programs more effectively to Indian tribes, and to initiate new programs in response to the needs of Indian tribes.

This ***Guide to USDA Programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives*** is an updated reference for American Indian and Alaska Native tribal leaders and members, planners, community leaders, producers, and anyone else who works with American Indians on numerous USDA programs. Please use this book often to decide which of our programs will best serve your needs and to improve your access to USDA programs and services.

President Clinton's vision of a strong government-to-government relationship with American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments inspired this publication. On April 29, 1994, at a historic meeting with the leaders of federally recognized Indian tribes at the White House, President Clinton issued an Executive Memorandum on Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments, and to follow up, the Clinton Administration, including USDA, has taken the following steps to build a strong partnership with Indian tribes:

- President Clinton's April 29, 1994, Executive Memorandum outlines principles to clarify the responsibility of the Federal Government to operate within a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.
- President Clinton established the Working Group on American Indians and Alaska Natives as part of the White House Domestic Policy Council whose purpose is to share and coordinate information on Indian tribes and programs, provide a forum for resolution of issues among Federal agencies, ensure the implementation of Presidential directives on American Indian policy, and promote initiatives to better serve Indian tribes and their members. USDA's under secretary for rural development is a member of the working group.
- President Clinton signed an Executive Order to protect American Indian sacred sites on May 24, 1996. The Executive Order supports USDA's ongoing consultation with Indian tribes and their members in order to accommodate the use and protection of Indian sacred sites.
- President Clinton signed an Executive Order on Tribal Colleges and Universities on October 19, 1996, to ensure that tribal colleges and universities have Federal resources committed to them on an equitable and continuing basis. In the spirit of the Executive Order, USDA works with the 29 Land-Grant Tribal Colleges to provide an annual award to strengthen instruction programs in the food and agricultural sciences and to disburse the interest from an endowment fund to each of these institutions.
- USDA has increased emphasis on economic development activities and programs in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. USDA's Rural Development mission area, working at the national, State, and local level to provide financial and technical assistance directly to tribal governments, has increased investments in tribal water and waste programs, housing, community facilities, and business projects.
- USDA is implementing an extensive joint outreach effort with the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) to heighten awareness of USDA services available to American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The IAC is a nonprofit corporation of 61 member Indian tribes devoted to the conservation, development, and use of American Indian agricultural resources for the benefit of American Indian people.

In his address to tribal leaders at the April 29, 1994, meeting at the White House, President Clinton said, "The Great Law of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy contained this advice: 'In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decision on the next seven generations.' We are stewards; we are caretakers. That standard will keep us great." The USDA poster that is reproduced on the cover of this ***Guide*** is entitled "For We Are the Keepers of the Seven Generations" and interprets this American Indian tradition. Artist Debra-Ann Pine, a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, created the poster for USDA.

As we make decisions today, we should consider the impact of our actions on our children's children to the Seventh Generation. This means we have a sacred and shared stake in improving the lives of our people and opening the gates of opportunity to all of them. I have great hope that the vision and policies of this Administration

will continue to benefit all people seven generations from now.